

endeavour to help the union out of its difficulties; true it is, their difficulties appear to have been of a somewhat imaginary character, considering they were already in possession of the required assistance; but having thus called forth the energies of the profession, the board has determined to do the thing handsomely, and, if they cannot return them their money, will give them their thanks.

It is observed by this guardian of their honour, as well as of their poor, "that of all the architects who sent in plans, Mr. Allom has the least cause to complain." How distressing to witness the ingratitude of mankind! After selecting me as the object of their munificent gratuity of twenty-five guineas, leaving the other luckless twenty-nine with nothing but their thanks, to think that the individual whom they have thus honoured should persist in believing this money well spent in prying into their proceedings; every one will allow, that to stand up and be popped at with one's own powder cannot be a pleasant thing. I really blush when I reflect on my conduct.

"But," cries one of the luckless twenty-nine, "if their choice has fallen on this *acme* of perfection in the shape of classification, inspection, and space, why don't they shew it? Why is the light of their architect thus hidden from us; is he about to patent the invention and afraid that his ideas should be stolen." Oh no, my dear sir; listen to the long and the short of it.

I made a pilgrimage to that classic spot called Clifton Workhouse, Pennywell Road, Bristol,—you all know the address, and it will no doubt dwell in your memories. I went for the sole purpose of being enlightened on this very point; but here let me whisper that you have not been dealing with grocers and cheese-mongers, whom by courtesy you call gentlemen when in office, but whom you never expect to act as such either in or out of it. No, no. I was told that these were the real and genuine sort: men who had been to school, and been taught manners; and some there were among them rejoicing in the proud title of patrons of the fine arts. Then was I glad; for I thought that no foul thing dare shew itself among such men; and with that I presented my petition.

Now, in those who are of a philosophic turn of mind, it will probably appear an easy task to explain the cause of the following effect.

Oliver Twist asking for more, never raised such a storm of virtuous indignation among the authorities of his workhouse, as burst forth from certain members of the board at the Clifton union when the simple request to see the successful design was made known to them; it is scarcely necessary to add that, astonished and confounded, scarcely knowing if a certain projecture of my own face was not lost in the sharpness of the contact, I returned with knowledge just as extensive regarding the object of my visit as at the outset of my journey, and having subsequently forwarded a letter, in which it was suggested that you might possibly consider yourselves entitled to a greater amount of good manners than was commonly conceded to paupers, an advertisement did appear a few days back in the *Times* newspaper, stating that a Bristol architect had carried off the palm, and that you might send for your thanks; but, as a warning to all rebellious competitors for the future, it was agreed not to name the individual who carried off the premium.

I trust, therefore, that my professional brethren will no longer knock their heads together under the idea that their brains have been sucked by these worthies, but rather ascribe the above phenomenon to the air of the place in which they were congregated; and I earnestly wish them the enjoyment of a climate so congenial to their tastes, and a habitation so fitted for their deserts. Apologising to you, Mr. Editor, for taking up so much of your space,—I am, Sir, &c.,

THOMAS ALLOM.

14, Hart-street, Bloomsbury-square,
April 16th.

•• Another correspondent on this matter, wishes to know why the twenty-nine competitors have not had their designs returned, nor any official announcement of the decision, although several weeks have elapsed since Mr. Allom's first letter appeared. The same writer thinks the letter of "A Guardian" was intended to shew that Mr. Allom was also a favoured competitor, but he does not establish his position.

COUNTY LUNATIC ASYLUM FOR SOMERSET.

SIR,—I venture again to address you on the subject of the County Lunatic Asylum for Somerset. I have waited patiently in hopes that some of your numerous readers might have obtained information respecting the decision of the visiting magistrates, and have done me, and the rest of the competitors, the favour to communicate the same through the medium of your journal; but from their silence, I must presume that all is still in darkness.

I have had some thought of waiting on the county members to solicit the required information, and should have done so long ago, could I have obtained the sentiments or names of any of the disappointed competitors; but perhaps there are none but myself that have been weak enough to believe in the honour and integrity of county magistrates, so I will conclude with—Oh! you blessed ministers above, keep me in patience, and, with ripened time, unfold the evil which is here wrapped up in countenance.

Though an humble individual, I am ready to unite in the adoption of any plan that may be suggested likely to effect a better state of competition, and would devote my time and best energies in the cause.

I again call on the profession to act with vigour, and not to waste their time in writing their own particular cases, which apply only to things gone by, and inform and enlighten all those who may require the future aid of architects how to obtain it without a fee. I am of opinion that all the exposure and satire that can be brought to bear on committees who act with want of judgment or partiality will never effect the reform required. A combination with architects is what is required! Is there no person in the profession with public spirit enough to offer the gratuitous use of his chambers for a meeting to discuss the subject?

I am, Sir, &c.,

A SUBSCRIBER TO YOUR WORK.

COMPETITIONS GENERALLY.

SIR,—Much has been written and appeared in the pages of your journal upon the subject of architectural competition, and many suggestions have been made with the view of correcting the evil universally acknowledged to exist, but not any appear to me worthy of adoption. In my opinion, the fault rests entirely with architects themselves, for as long as persons in the profession are found weak and foolish enough to enter into competitions as at present conducted, and waste their time and money in such fruitless enterprises, they richly merit the treatment they frequently experience. In those cases that have been brought before the public, through the laudable instrumentality of your journal, it has generally appeared that some *favoured one* has been deputed to carry out the work after inspecting and studying the designs, &c., so kindly and *gratuitously* forwarded by his more intelligent and enlightened brethren, during his pleasure, or until he has acquired sufficient information to be enabled to perfect and mature his own plan. The plan adopted at the Reading competition seems to me to be open to objections, or rather adds to the evil than otherwise, even if every competitor would attend, for I imagine few would feel disposed to travel far at a further expenditure of time and money, merely for the purpose of selecting the best design; nor do I think the competitors themselves are the most competent parties to do so, as they would enter upon the matter with peculiar crude notions of their own, imbibed during the execution of their designs. The present system of competition is conducted upon very ridiculous and erroneous principles, for the board, or committee of management, that have to select the best and most suitable design are generally composed of very heterogeneous materials, country gentlemen, merchants, tradesmen, &c., who, as a matter of course, have little or no knowledge of practical architecture, and are therefore totally incompetent to enter into the various merits of the designs submitted to them, and so decide impartially, as it often happens, if no favourite is in the way,—that they look more at the pictorial effect of the drawings, than their real and sterling architectural merits. It may be urged by those favourable to the present system, that it is the means of drawing out latent talent, but, on the other hand, I beg to observe

that it also brings into the same arena incompetent pretenders, as alluded to by "A Looker-On" in your last number, and this at once accounts for the frequent failures and accidents we repeatedly hear of in the construction of buildings, both public and private, in this country. If this system of competition continues, I would suggest the propriety of the designs being submitted for the decision of the Royal Institute of British Architects, or a committee composed of that honourable body, as the most competent tribunal, and their decision should not be gratuitous, but upon payment of certain fees; this would insure the selection of the best design; and, as it would be tempered with justice and impartiality, our most able and talented men, would think it worth their while to compete. In the same way, engineering works might be submitted for the decision of the Institute of Civil Engineers, and no architect or engineer ought, in justice to himself or the profession, to compete unless the promoters of the scheme would consent to such an arrangement. This would also be the means of still further extending the usefulness of these institutions.

Building competitions are also very erroneously and unfairly conducted. I think the system adopted by the Board of Ordnance appears to be founded on the principles of justice and equity; if work is to be well and properly executed, it is evident we ought to pay an adequate price for it, so that builders may be fairly remunerated for their labour; I therefore think all building work should be contracted for at an equitable schedule of prices, subject to the fluctuations of the market price of building materials, and the work measured and paid for accordingly; this would check the spirit of reckless competition now too prevalent, every party would receive the full value for his labour, and work would be efficiently and substantially constructed, which is not the case at present.

Brecon.

B. BAYLIS.

WORKS IN THE PROVINCES.

At the Bedfordshire Quarter Sessions, which commenced on Thursday week, on the motion of Lord St. John, it was determined to postpone for one year the proposed alterations in the county prisons, the estimated expense of which amounts to 20,000*l*.

The committee for the foundation of new parks in Manchester have purchased Lark-hill near Pendleton, the late residence of W. Garnett, Esq. The purchase includes an area of seven acres, and the price asked by Mr. Garnett was 5,000*l*, but he ultimately accepted 4,500*l*, dearing the committee to consider the difference of 500*l* as his contribution to the public parks. Lark-hill was erected at a cost of 10,000*l*. The subscription in Manchester for public walks, parks, and wash-houses, had last Saturday reached the sum of 30,320*l*. 19*s*. 11*d*.

The contemplated improvements of the River Don Company are said to be proceeding very satisfactorily. About seventy workmen are engaged in raising the embankment six feet higher than at present on each side of the canal from Stainforth. The quickwood fence alongside the bauling path has been removed further back, so as to allow of the present path being added to the canal. A considerable length of the embankment is already completed. The swing bridges, giving an open and uninterrupted communication to the sea, are nearly finished, and vessels with fixed masts can now come up to Doncaster without the least interruption.

In Wales, several new blast furnaces are being erected, and others are in contemplation. Sir John Guest is erecting one at Dowlais, and the Neath Abbey Iron Company have commenced building two at Cwm Neath. The spirited proprietors of the Porthcawl iron and coal works, Messrs. Mallins and Rawlinsons, are erecting another furnace at Cefn Cw-g, together with twelve coke ovens, and a large number of workmen's cottages. At Coed-y-Garth and Llynarth, three new furnaces, coke ovens, blast engine, workmen's cottages, &c., are in the course of erection.

At Porthcawl, near Swansea, the Llynri Iron Company have commenced building a new furnace, forge, and revolving mills at their works.